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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [AEMR](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KFLO](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [AMGT](#) [IZ](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: TFI201: NIGERIA QUIET IN WAKE OF IRAQ ATTACK

Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter. Reasons 1.5 (B&D).

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY: News of the initial attack by the Coalition of the Willing (COW) on Iraq spread rapidly. Most Nigerians are aware hostilities have begun, but the initial public reaction was muted. The mood now is tense and expectant. Public response to the hostilities will likely be delayed until tomorrow, March 21, after Friday prayers and after potential demonstrators had an extra day to organize. END SUMMARY.

THE MOOD

[1](#)2. (SBU) Throughout the nation, Embassy contacts report no demonstrations or violence. While Nigeria remains calm on the surface, privately, many (especially religious leaders) express resentment and opposition to the war. Christian and Muslim clerics alike have called on their followers to pray. While the Christian protesters have no convenient timetable, the Muslims will listen attentively to Juma'at Prayers March 21 to hear what the Imams have to say. Large crowds associated with the Friday gatherings provide a convenient recruitment base for demonstrations, while the Mosques themselves offer excellent venues for launching points.

REPORTS OF DEMONSTRATIONS UNCONFIRMED

[1](#)3. (SBU) Reports of an anti-American rally in Kano March 19 and one in Abuja March 20 appear to be baseless. In Kano, dozens of Hizba (religious police) members demonstrated at the Kano State Government offices, insisting that their role in implementing Shari'a in Kano should be officially endorsed. Kano State officials assured the Embassy they were taking the threat of violence seriously and working to minimize the chance of any protests taking a violent turn.

[1](#)4. (SBU) In Abuja, Ambassador and PolCouns transited an area where a 3,000 person demonstration was reportedly taking place. They saw nothing that would indicate a protest. A demonstration thought to be about one-third that size did take place in the Central Area, but it targeted the GON's failure to attack corruption. The demonstrators evidenced no interest in Iraq, according to Mission surveillance detection assets.

[1](#)5. (C) COMMENT: It is still early in the COW campaign, and potential protesters have not yet had time to coalesce. Friday, March 21, will give a first indication of what we can expect in Nigeria in response to the attack on Iraq.
JETER